



2007 Session Preview

34th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Winter 2007

Rep. Eileen Cody

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Dear Neighbors,

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your representative. It's an honor.

This newsletter is my chance to tell you about issues that are important to our families and neighborhoods in the 34th District. Here are the major things we're working on:

- Better schools and universities;
- Creating good jobs you can raise a family on; and
- Affordable health care for everyone.

My seatmate, Rep. Joe McDermott, is leading House Democrats on education policy, and I know he's sending you updates with information about improving our schools and universities.

Since I chair the Health Care and Wellness Committee, this newsletter will focus more about what reforms we're working on to make sure everybody – young or old, rich or poor – has access to good health care.

Thank you again for taking the time to read this newsletter. I believe our democracy is strongest when citizens can be active and informed, and I appreciate everyone who contacts me with ideas, comments and stories.

Sincerely yours,

Rep. Eileen Cody



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Health care

The problems we face

- Health care costs are rising at a rate that state and local governments, businesses and consumers can't afford to sustain.
- 72,500 children lack health coverage.
- 520,000 adults in our state don't have coverage – including many full-time workers and small business owners.
- People without health insurance rely on emergency rooms, the most expensive possible option, driving up costs for everyone.
- Workers with health insurance often lose coverage when they change jobs.
- The hundreds of different health insurance plans are confusing for consumers and businesses, and a paperwork nightmare for doctors and providers.

What we're doing to help kids

In 2005, lawmakers passed a bill making it our state's goal that every child – regardless of income or circumstances – will have health coverage by 2010.

HB 1071 represents the next steps in meeting that goal. This law would:

Make it easier to get health care for children -- Rather than having 3 separate publicly funded programs in Washington state to provide coverage to children in low income families, establish one single program that covers children in families with income up to 250% of the federal poverty level (\$41,500 per year for a family of 3; \$50,000 per year for a family of 4).

Promote better health, not just better coverage – Having health care coverage is important, but our real goal is healthier kids. This law would track outcomes to make sure children are getting healthier each year.



Partner with parents – Help parents enroll their children in affordable health care plans, ensure their children get the right health care services at the right time, and build good nutrition and physical activity into their children's lives.

Ensure better nutrition and PE in schools -- By 2010, only healthy food and drink choices will be available in schools and children in grades K through 8 will get daily physical education.

Improve health care every year -- Improve the quality of services children receive through the new program by setting clear expectations for improvements in areas such as immunization rates, well-child check ups and care of children with chronic illnesses, like asthma or diabetes.



Health care reforms to help workers and businesses

Health benefits. Those are magic words for many workers. They don't want to change jobs because they'll lose health coverage for their family – or they have to move from a small business to a big company because they can't afford to go without health care.



The highest number of uninsured people are 19 to 35-year-olds who work for small businesses.

What if you can't change jobs? You could buy health coverage from insurance companies in what's called the individual market. But it'll cost you.

And if you already have cancer or a chronic illness like diabetes, it could cost incredible amounts of money to get health coverage. Most people can't afford it.

I believe it's our duty to fix this so people with jobs that don't offer health coverage – or those unlucky enough to come down with cancer – don't have to hold fundraisers to pay their medical bills.

Eileen Cody

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

A public-private marketplace for health care

More people + state buying power = better deals.

I'm proposing to pool together the power of numbers to give everybody – workers, individuals and small business owners – a better deal for less than they're paying today. This reform uses the power of the marketplace to maximize what we get for every dollar.

Here's how it works:

- All health care insurers in Washington are allowed to sell health plans through this marketplace
- All of the plans are portable, so your family won't lose coverage if you switch jobs
- No individual can be denied coverage, and the large pool of people helps make the plans affordable

This law would fix the problem of people trying, and failing, to buy affordable health care in the individual market.

If you work for a big business or for the state, you're not affected.

Wouldn't it be nice to see health care costs slow down – or go down – for once?



Education

Our economy doesn't run on horsepower anymore – it runs on brainpower. And a high-school degree isn't enough if Washington state workers are going to win the global race for the best jobs in the world.

Here's what we're working on this session on education:

Early learning

On the first day of kindergarten, half of our kids are behind. Many never catch up. Investing in early learning gives every child – regardless of their parents' income or where they live – a chance to succeed.

Better math and science

Gov. Chris Gregoire put money in her budget to standardize math education across the state and hire 750 new math and science teachers. I think that's a good start.

Stop handicapping school elections

Why is 59 percent of the vote a landslide for a politician, but a failure for a school district trying to pass a levy? I support a reform to fix this so schools are treated equally at the ballot box, not handicapped from the start.

More opportunities for college

The governor's budget creates room for 8,300 more college students, including 3,300 in high-demand fields like nursing and engineering. I support making more room because more students deserve a chance to earn a college degree, the surest ticket to the American Dream.



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34th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



Jobs

Washington state isn't just home to Microsoft, Starbucks and Amazon.com – we also have thousands of small businesses who are creating new jobs and new products every day.



We're considering a number of reforms to help create more jobs.

Improve research and development

We're going to give funding to world-class research being done at our flagship research universities, the University of Washington and Washington State Universities.

I also support the Innovation Zone Act (House Bill 1091) to build innovation zones where industries can grow around research institutions.

Clean energy

I believe we must continue to push hard for clean, local energy because we can't remain addicted to expensive foreign oil. The prices for oil from the Middle East are too unstable, and I don't want our economy held hostage by international politics.

Tax breaks for new businesses

Small businesses actually create the most jobs. But small businesses don't make money right away. It takes time. To create jobs, I support exempting new small businesses from paying state B & O taxes for the first six months.

I also support boosting funding for Small Business Development Centers, which give critical technical services such as business planning and payroll training to new and existing small businesses.

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